

# The Oregonian

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## Dance driven by character

**By Cerinda Survant**  
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On a day when most women her age are wearing colorful Gore-Tex parkas or black leather jackets, Randee Paufve walks through Portland's hail and drizzle in a rust-colored, three-quarter coat trimmed in fake fur, a hand-me-down from a bag of coats passed to Paufve's dancing partner from her adoptive grandmother.

The combination of high-style and retro in Paufve's choice of raingear echoes the kind of dances this recent transplant from San Francisco makes, the dances she and a handful of dancers from Portland and San Francisco are performing through Sunday at Conduit.

Paufve's dancing spills and drapes like the latest microfiber, simultaneously silky and sticky. Hands and feet sweep and arc, checked and supported by a long, limber, tautly muscled torso. It definitely isn't natural – no wrinkles, slubs or thin spots in the fabric; this is a highly technical dance vocabulary, not pedestrian movement or any kind of happy accident. The dancing is so polished it's almost as slick as high-tech polyester.

But Paufve's dances appeal to a viewer's sense of drama. They're expressive, evocative, entertaining even; driven by character instead of concept, set to talking and singing or appealing recorded music. They're fleshy like a 1940s pin-up, not bony like a supermodel.

When Paufve refers to one dance on the program as "my most old-fashioned work, my most 'modern dance' modern dance,"

her shoulders tighten. She seems both defensive and defiant, as if accused of being derivative or hopelessly out of date.

She is neither: She has just left behind 12 years of solid professional experience in a dance community where the dominant aesthetic differs radically from Portland's. The most respected (and generally most exciting) dancing in Portland is abstract: dancing about dancing, about structure, about form. In San Francisco, artists like Joe Goode, Margie Jenkins and Rinde Eckert have fostered greater interest in narrative and expression. Not better. Not worse. Just different.

Paufve, a native of Binghamton, NY, moved to the Bay Area after finishing a master's degree in dance at the State University of New York at Brockport. She went from "cleaning toilets in exchange for classes" to studio teaching, dancing for other choreographers, self-producing her own concerts and a faculty position at California State University at Hayward.

Paufve moved to Portland in July and weeks later debuted in the Gregg Bielemeier Dance Project's smash "Odd Duck Lake," dancing in top form, full of ease, conviction and humor. Bielemeier cast her solely on the strength of Josie Moseley's recommendation.

"I knew she was coming into town, and these would be great people for her to work with," Moseley said. "I knew from seeing her in the studio that she's conscious, that she's working as hard as she can and is really devoted to dance. She's a beautiful dancer. I like her energy, her performance quality, her love for what she does. And she does it so well."